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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000264

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STATE FOR AF/W  
STATE FOR INR/AA  
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK  
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR  
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH  
SAO PAOLO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#) [ELECTIONS](#)  
SUBJECT: LACK OF ELECTION PREPARATION RAISES QUESTIONS IN  
OYO STATE

REF: LAGOS 188

LAGOS 00000264 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Election preparations in Oyo, a key southwestern state, have been scant. Neither Governor Rashidi Ladoja nor Action Congress (AC) gubernatorial candidate Taoheed Adedoja have seen voter registration lists, prototype ballots, ballot boxes, nor the hiring of sufficient numbers of staff needed to conduct elections. In a March 29 meeting with Consul General, Governor Ladoja said that his refusal to support President Obasanjo's third term and Oyo godfather Lamidi Adedibu's support for the initiative fueled the power struggle that has rent Oyo State over the past year. In his March 30 meeting with the Consul General, AC candidate Adedoja described Governor Ladoja as a spoiler seeking to use the Labor Party to defeat both the AC and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Both Ladoja and Adedoja complained of wanton violence by Adedibu's minions. We attempted to meet Adedibu but his office said he was not available. End summary.

No Election Preparations in Oyo State  
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¶2. (C) Both People's Democratic Party (PDP) Governor Rasheed Ladoja and Action Congress (AC) governorship candidate Teofeek Adedoja told the Consul General in separate conversations that they had yet to see a voter registration list, ballot boxes, prototype ballots, or the hiring of sufficient local staff to conduct the election. Adedoja said he was in the process of obtaining the voters list from Independent National Election Commission (INEC). He approximated a total of 1.7 million registered voters in Oyo State. Despite the lack of preparation, Gov Ladoja assured the Consul General elections were still possible; "Nigerians are wise magicians," able to pull together the necessary components, he stated sarcastically. (Comment: Ladoja implied that the semblance of an election may occur but the exercise would significantly deviate from what would be considered free and fair. End comment)

## AC Candidate Faces Campaign Challenges

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¶3. (C) Adedoba highlighted two challenges to his campaign: unexpected expenses and time. He explained that supporters want something in return for their support, such as transportation to rallies or to the polls, which has added unexpected expense to the campaign. There are over 500 groups competing for his time, Adedoba said, and they are not satisfied to meet just with his representatives. The lack of radio and television to spread the AC's campaign message makes eye-to-eye contact essential to the AC campaign, Adedoba added. He expressed concern that his political opponents may be able to capitalize on the anger some groups have over not being able to meet him.

## Adedibu's Support for Third Term Key to Oyo Power

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¶4. (C) Governor Ladoja explained the rift in the state PDP stemmed from his refusal to support President Obasanjo's quest for a third term. After he rebuked the President's entreaty for support, trouble began, recanted Ladoja. Before then, Ladoja said he had effectively corralled Lamidi Adedibu, the eminence grise of Oyo politics. After his rebuff of the President, Obasanjo let Adedibu out of the stall, thanks to Adedibu's support for the third term.

¶5. (C) With Adedibu given control of the state party, he engineered Ladoja's impeachment and stripped others of their official stations. Although Ladoja eventually won redress in the courts to regain his gubernatorial seat, his victory was pyrrhic. Too much time had elapsed. Ladoja could not contest for the PDP gubernatorial nomination. Also, his overture to the AC failed to land him that party's nomination; moreover, defecting to another party would have

LAGOS 00000264 002.2 OF 003

gotten him in the cross hair of re-impeachment. After striking out with the AC and PDP, Ladoja decided to back the Labor Party. Ladoja had been working to disqualify both Adedoba and Akala from contesting, so that Ladoja's acolyte in the Labor Party (LP), Basiru Apapa, could win by virtual default. Adedoba is convinced that Ladoja is less concerned with winning the election than in spoiling for Adedoba's and Akala's ambitions. This would allow Ladoja to play kingmaker, thus replacing Adedibu as the local strongman.

## President Wants Win in Oyo Backyard

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¶6. (C) Both Governor Ladoja and Adedoba stressed the importance of an Oyo State win for PDP to President Obasanjo, who does not want to lose his ethnic backyard, as in 1999 when he lost the states in the South West geo-political zone.

Based on his assessment of popular sentiment, Adedoba contended the PDP would not be able to win either the gubernatorial or presidential elections in Oyo State in free and fair elections. He insisted the AC would win. The only way the PDP would win would be via intimidation and vote manipulation.

## Police Unlikely to Control Violence

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¶7. (C) Both Ladoja and Adedoba complained that Adedibu has hired thugs to intimidate opposition candidate supporters. Whenever Adedibu or PDP candidate Akala enter a community, the thugs would sweep through, pilfering from market stalls and forcing marketers to stand around and act supportive of the PDP during their rallies. Many market people pre-emptively shut their stalls out of fear of looting by Adedibu's thugs. Adedoba noted that the Police Commissioner is under Adedibu's control; as a result, he predicted, neither the police nor the army will play a role in stopping election-related violence. Both Governor Ladoja and Adedoba

questioned the effectiveness of election observers, claiming observers will have no power to stop irregularities or violence. Despite this, Adedoja urged the U.S. Government to provide observers, and promised to help pinpoint areas in which trouble might break out during the elections.

¶18. (C) Governor Ladoja joked that the six data-capture machines found in Adedibu's home made him perhaps the sole individual truly qualified to train others on the use of the machine. No one can identify the tainted machines because they were simply mixed in with the others when they were returned, nor can anyone determine to what extent these machines may have been used to fraudulently register people while in Adedibu's possession.

Lagos Candidate Fashola Has Oyo Backing  
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¶19. (C) Adedoja said Lagos State AC governorship candidate Fashola has the support of the Oyo Action Congress; although the Lagos race will be tight, he believes Fashola will win, thanks to his strong grassroots support. In Ondo and Ogun States, Adedoja believes the power of incumbency will give the PDP an inside track. In Ekiti, another South West state with a tight race, Adedoja thinks the strong support the PDP has given Oni will propel him to victory.

¶10. (C) Both Ladoja and Adedoja think AC presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar would have a good chance at winning the presidential race if INEC allowed him to run, because of widespread popular disappointment with Obasanjo and the PDP.

¶11. (C) On April 4, the Abuja High Court ruled against Governor Ladoja in his bid to extend his tenure to April 29, ¶2008. INEC is standing by its position that Akala has not been disqualified and can contest the election on April 14. Violence continues to mar the campaign. On April 2 there were reports of attacks on rival parties in Ogbomosho, where suspected supporters of the PDP tried to set ablaze the home

LAGOS 00000264 003.4 OF 003

of LP senatorial candidate Abdul Fatai Tayo Buhari, and in Ibadan, where Adedoja's campaign train ran into an ambush. Soldiers were deployed on April 3 to forestall further violence.

BROWNE